

The Barnhill Case, 1901-1904: The Limits of Ritual in the Kirk

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The second half of the nineteenth century was a significant period of reform in the public worship of the Church of Scotland. Following the innovations of Dr Robert Lee of Greyfriars the general assembly of 1865 passed an act which sought to check the progress of such liturgical change. On the motion of Dr W. R. Pirie of Dyce, one of the principal opponents of Lee's practices, the regulation of worship in parishes was to rest with the presbyteries of the church.¹ The operation of the "Pirie Act", however, led to individual ministers being able to exercise considerable freedom in the conduct of worship. Presbyteries were not usually willing to intervene unless congregations were seriously divided over the issue, and even when investigations took place varying conclusions could be reached by different presbyteries in relation to similar forms of worship. As a rule the general assembly only had the opportunity to pronounce on liturgical matters when a case was brought before it from the lower courts of the church. It was in considering such cases that the mind of the church was reached on what was acceptable or unacceptable in the realm of ritual and ceremonial. One such case involved the worship in St Margaret's chapel-of-ease at Barnhill, Broughty Ferry, and came before the assembly between 1901 and 1903.

The minister of Barnhill was the Rev. Thomas Newbigging Adamson (1855-1911), a son of the manse and one of those ministers who were influenced by the new climate of opinion in the Kirk regarding liturgical matters. He was a member of the Church Service Society which drew together a large number of ministers and members concerned with the study and practice of public worship. Adamson was also a high churchman who sought to recover the catholic tradition of worship and whose position was expressed in the formation of the Scottish Church Society in 1892. The society was interested in a whole range of matters such as the nature of the church and of ordination to the ministry as well as with worship and the sacraments. The primary concern of the society, however, was with doctrine rather than with ritual. The first president, Professor William Milligan of Aberdeen, wished to emphasise that as high churchmen they were concerned with the gospel proclaimed in public worship rather than with the details of

¹ *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1865, 46, 48. See further D. M. Murray, "Disruption to Union", in *Studies in the History of Worship in Scotland*, eds. D. B. Forrester and D. M. Murray (Edinburgh, 1984), 84.

ceremonial. With regard to liturgy, the largest and most influential group within the society sought to recover the richness of the presbyterian heritage of the Kirk and looked back to the period immediately after the Reformation for inspiration. Others, however, were more influenced by anglicanism and in particular by the Oxford Movement. A prominent example of this emphasis is Dr James Cooper minister of East St Nicholas in Aberdeen and the first secretary of the society.² Cooper wished above all to foster the reunion of the two national churches north and south of the border. He was also the founder of the Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society which was concerned with the fabric and furnishings of churches. Cooper was more interested in ceremonial than those who occupied the mainstream of thinking within the society. Adamson was a follower of James Cooper and his ministry at Barnhill illustrates the tendency towards ritualism within the high church movement in this period. Adamson was not therefore representative of the Scottish Church Society, and its leading members, including Cooper, were unable to defend all of his practices when they were brought before the assembly. The Barnhill Case thus shows the limits of ritual which were considered acceptable at the time. In addition certain of Adamson's changes were allowed by the assembly and the case demonstrates the acceptance of several reforms advocated by the exponents of the catholic tradition within the Kirk.

The Barnhill Case arose out of the type of worship practised by Adamson during his ministry at St Margaret's, but the origins of the case can also be traced further back to the circumstances surrounding the founding of a place of worship in the area. Barnhill was an area of new suburban housing between Broughty Ferry and Monifieth to the east of Dundee. It was situated in the burgh of Broughty Ferry but ecclesiastically it was in the parish of Monifieth. The seeds of the future controversy were sown by the fact that the congregation was founded by a group of leading laymen in the area of whom some were of high church sympathies. The principal figure in the setting up of the new church was Thomas Taylor of Cambustay, a jute merchant, who provided most of the funds for the erection of the first building, an iron church.³ Taylor had also been one of the founding members of St Stephen's church in Broughty Ferry where James Cooper had been the minister before going to Aberdeen in 1881. On one occasion

² D. M. Murray, "James Cooper and the East Church Case at Aberdeen, 1882-3: The High Church Movement Vindicated", *ante*, xix (1977), 219-20.

³ J. F. G. Orr, "Saint Margaret's Parish Church, Barnhill, Broughty Ferry", *Transactions of the Scottish Ecclesiological Society*, 4.3 (1913-15), 259; *The Story of St Margaret's Church, Barnhill, Dundee* (1974), 6; St Margaret's Parish Church, Barnhill, "Narrative" of the church and parish of Barnhill. Minutes of the Kirk Session of Barnhill, 1907-20.

Cooper referred to Thomas Taylor as the founder of both St Margaret's and St Stephen's and expressed a high opinion of his christian character.⁴ Taylor was an elder of St Stephen's before resigning to become associated with the congregation at Barnhill. According to a later newspaper article Taylor was an "ardent admirer" of James Cooper.⁵ In addition, 15 of the 74 who signed the petition for the erection of a church at Barnhill were members of St Stephen's. It would appear that Dr James Leask who succeeded Cooper in Broughty Ferry did not continue his predecessor's style of churchmanship. Another of the founding members was George Watt, later sheriff-clerk of Dundee, who became a member of the Scottish Church Society on its formation. Two of the leading men who were instrumental in founding the congregation were high churchmen and one was connected with James Cooper who had left Broughty Ferry for Aberdeen in 1881, the year the first proposal for the setting up of a new church in the area was made to the kirk session of Monifieth.⁶ It can thus be reasonably assumed that one of the main reasons for the founding of the congregation of St Margaret's was to provide a place of "catholic" worship in the area.

The kirk session of Monifieth opposed the first proposal for the setting up of a church at Barnhill. They did not consider that the population at that time justified such a step and they had not taken an initiative in the matter.⁷ The new church, they said, would be a weak charge which would take members away from other congregations and would be a source of "constant dispeace" in the area.⁸ The scheme in their opinion was one of church attraction rather than church extension. They were not consulted before the petition for the erection of the church was sent to the presbytery and they then withdrew all further "interference and responsibility" in the case. The lack of understanding and communication between the Barnhill congregation and the parish of Monifieth was one of the features of the subsequent case and was due to the way in which the church had been founded.

The signatories proceeded to send their petition to the presbytery of Dundee in July 1883 without the prior consent of the kirk session. The presbytery decided that an additional place of worship was desirable in the area and appointed a committee to draft a constitution.⁹ In their report to the presbytery the committee noted that there were 396 residents in Barnhill, that some members

⁴ *The Evening Post*, Dundee, 5 March 1904.

⁵ *Evening Post*, 14 June 1901.

⁶ Scottish Record Office [SRO], CH2/270/6, Minutes of the Kirk Session of Monifieth, 18 September 1881.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 8 January 1883.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 20 August 1883.

⁹ SRO, CH2/103/23, Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 7 November 1883.

of the Free and United Presbyterian Churches had indicated that they would join a Church of Scotland congregation in the district, that the sittings at Monifieth parish church were mostly taken, and that 64 communicants of the parish church lived in the area.¹⁰

The hope that members of the other two main presbyterian denominations would join the new church was least likely to be realised by the type of ministry which came to be exercised at Barnhill. With the opening of the new church in 1884, it was to James Cooper that the congregation looked for guidance in seeking a minister.¹¹ Cooper suggested his first assistant at Aberdeen, the Rev. Thomas N. Adamson, who had previously been assistant at St Paul's Dundee. It was no doubt when Adamson was in Dundee that he became acquainted with Cooper. Cooper's biographer and friend, Dr H. J. Wotherspoon, made the following observation upon Adamson as Cooper's assistant in Aberdeen:¹²

"He was Cooper's intimate and trusted friend, more than an assistant — his counsellor and coadjutor — highly sympathetic to Cooper's ideas, a devoted and able worker, competent and instructed, but without his chief's native caution or *flair* for the possible. Cooper had made it a condition of his going to Aberdeen that Adamson should assist him there, but under all the circumstances one may doubt whether so eager a spirit was likely to be his best adviser."

Adamson therefore saw Cooper face the challenge to his position in the East Church Case when 11 of his elders appealed to the presbytery against his high church views and practices, and Cooper had vindicated his doctrine as standing within the reformed tradition of the Kirk.¹³ As emerged during the case, however, Cooper had seriously misjudged the extent to which he had enjoyed the support of his elders for the kind of changes he had made. The way in which he had expounded his doctrine and explained his practices had also been open to misunderstanding. It may be that Adamson's advice was partly behind Cooper's failure to judge the situation aright. At any rate Adamson did not show Cooper's "caution" or "flair for the possible" in the exercise of his ministry at Barnhill.

Since St Margaret's was a chapel-of-ease it was still subject to the kirk session of Monifieth. Without receiving the explicit permission of the session Adamson held quarterly celebrations of communion at Barnhill from 1885 and additional monthly

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5 December 1883.

¹¹ Orr, "Saint Margaret's Parish Church", 259.

¹² H. J. Wotherspoon, *James Cooper: A Memoir* (London, 1926), 124; cf., 126.

¹³ D. Murray, "James Cooper and the East Church Case at Aberdeen".

celebrations were added in 1894. The sacrament was celebrated twice-yearly in the parish church.¹⁴ Daily services were also held at St Margaret's.¹⁵ The first complaint about Adamson's ministry, however, was occasioned by the service for the dedication of the new stone church in 1895. The complaint was made by the Rev. Neil K. Mackenzie of Longforgan at a meeting of the presbytery of Dundee.¹⁶ The presbytery at first refused to consider the complaint and the matter was taken to the general assembly before Mackenzie could make his motion.¹⁷ He proposed that the presbytery appoint a committee to investigate the forms of worship at Barnhill. He referred to a newspaper article which had described the dedication service as following an episcopal order with collects, the chanting of psalms and a litany.¹⁸ The presbytery unanimously agreed, however, that no case had been made for their interference.¹⁹ That the courts of the church were made to consider the forms of worship at Barnhill in a more thorough way was due largely to the efforts of the Rev. Jacob Primmer.

Jacob Primmer, minister of Townhill Church, Dunfermline, was the leading anti-Romanist campaigner within the Kirk during this period. He had been greatly influenced in his opposition to the Church of Rome by the Edinburgh lawyer John Hope.²⁰ He was frequently absent from his charge on account of his holding protestant conventicles throughout Scotland. He was a persistent critic of James Cooper and was probably behind the petition which had led to the East Church Case in Aberdeen.²¹ With the defection of the Rev. John Charleson of Thornliebank for the Church of Rome in 1901, he saw evidence for a secret Romanising plot by the Scottish Church Society.²² Charleson had at one time been a member of the society but had been asked to leave because of his "Romish proclivities".²³ Primmer was also outspoken against the internal arrangements of such churches as St Cuthbert's in Edinburgh and Crathie.²⁴ His attention had been drawn to Barnhill not just by the complaints over the dedication service but also by an

¹⁴ Minutes of the Kirk Session of Monifieth, 6 June 1885; Church of Scotland, *Year Book*, 1894.

¹⁵ Orr, "St Margaret's Parish Church", 264.

¹⁶ SRO, CH2/103/25, Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 5 February 1896.

¹⁷ *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1896, 46.

¹⁸ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 10 June 1896; *The Dundee Advertiser*, 18 November 1895.

¹⁹ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 1 July 1896.

²⁰ J. Boyd Primmer, *Life of Pastor Jacob Primmer, Minister of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1916), 8.

²¹ Murray, "James Cooper and the East Church Case at Aberdeen", 222.

²² Jacob Primmer, *Mr Charleson's "Why I left the Church of Scotland", or the Secret Romanising "Scottish Church Society" Exposed* (Dunfermline, 1901).

²³ Scottish Church Society, *Annual Report*, 1901-2, 18.

²⁴ J. Boyd Primmer, *Life of Jacob Primmer*, pp. 285-91, 295-6, 298-302, 305-7.

article published in the *Transactions of the Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society* in which Adamson described the church buildings and its furnishings and spoke of the “altar” and its equipments.²⁵ Primmer referred to the article in a sermon he preached at Townhill in December 1896.²⁶ In March 1896, he sent a circular to all presbyteries and synods of the kirk drawing attention to what he considered to be the “popery” at Barnhill and to the unsuccessful attempt by the Rev. Neil Mackenzie to have the matter investigated by the presbytery of Dundee.²⁷ Primmer took action himself in 1901 by writing to the presbytery and drawing their attention to a letter by William Wallace Drysdale, the secretary of the Dunfermline Protestant Defence Association, which appeared in the Dundee *Evening Post* and which described an early morning communion service at Barnhill.²⁸ According to Drysdale’s account, Adamson had prayed and celebrated communion with his back to the congregation and had “genuflected” before the altar. The people had gone forward to receive communion and had knelt at the altar. Primmer had added that there was a “popish” altar in the church with a large metal cross, vases with flowers, two candles, and everything ready for the sacrifice of the mass. Primmer thus brought Adamson’s “unsoundness and heterodoxy in doctrine” and his “divisive courses” before the notice of the presbytery.²⁹ The Barnhill Case thus did not originate with the members or office-bearers of the congregation, with the kirk session of Monifieth or the presbytery of Dundee, but with the action of Jacob Primmer.

The presbytery did not at first consider the letter, and Primmer successfully appealed to the assembly which instructed the presbytery to hear his complaints.³⁰ At the presbytery’s hearing in June 1901, Primmer submitted a long statement entitled “The Sacrifice of the Mass in St Margaret’s Chapel, Barnhill, Broughty Ferry”, which contained a full description of the furnishings and ornaments of the church.³¹ The presbytery agreed to appoint a committee to make “due inquiry” into the whole subject.³² The committee was convened by the moderator of the presbytery, the Rev. John Mills of St Matthew’s, Dundee, a member of the Scottish Church Society, and it included several ministers who were sympathetic to Adamson’s position such as Dr James M. Campbell

²⁵ T. N. Adamson, “How to make something of an Iron Church”, *Transactions of the Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society*, 3.9 (1894-6), 14-8.

²⁶ *Advertiser*, 22 December 1896.

²⁷ J. Boyd Primmer, *Life of Jacob Primmer*, 188.

²⁸ *Evening Post*, 6 March 1901.

²⁹ SRO, CH2/103/26, Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 1 May 1901.

³⁰ *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1901, 70.

³¹ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 12 June 1901.

³² *Ibid.*

of Wallacetown. Also on the committee were the Rev. W. M. Inglis of Auchterhouse and an elder, Mr James Rollo, who were the leading opponents in the presbytery of Adamson's practices. The committee met twice with Adamson, once with the minister and kirk session of Monifieth, and once with those members of the church and residents of Barnhill who wished to attend. On the basis of the committee's report, the presbytery enjoined Adamson to administer communion in accordance with the general practice of the church.³³ Two other motions had been put forward but were not carried, one which was more lenient towards Adamson, and another proposed by W. M. Inglis which called for the removal of the altar and its "ritualistic ornaments". Primmer, however, appealed to the synod of Angus and Mearns, saying that the internal arrangements of the church had not been dealt with, and that a libel should have been served on Adamson.³⁴ The synod dismissed his appeal and Primmer took his case to the assembly of 1902.

At the assembly Primmer drew comparisons between Adamson's communion service and the order of the mass, and again said that the images and ornaments at Barnhill were against the law of the church.³⁵ Primmer felt that he had the whole assembly with him.³⁶ Three motions were proposed. The Rev. Dr Andrew Miller of Glasgow, who was seconded by James Cooper, moved that the appeal be dismissed. Another motion, proposed by the Rev. Dr G. T. Jamieson of Portobello, called for the assembly to admonish Adamson to observe the laws of the church. The motion which became the judgement of the assembly was proposed by the Rev. Dr Archibald Scott of Edinburgh and was supported by the Rev. Dr G. W. Sprott, the prominent liturgical scholar and one of the founding members of the Scottish Church Society. The assembly enjoined the presbytery of Dundee to visit Barnhill and bring the internal arrangements, the forms of worship, and especially the order for communion, into conformity with the "general usage and practice" of the church.³⁷ An addendum stated that Jacob Primmer was not to be recognised as a party in any future proceedings. The case, having been initiated by Primmer, had become the concern of the courts of the church.

When the presbytery came to visit Barnhill in July 1902 Adamson applied to be heard through a law agent.³⁸ On his request being refused the proceedings were affected by Adamson and his

³³ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 6 November 1901.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4 December 1901; SRO, CH2/12/16, Minutes of the Synod of Angus and Mearns, 22 April 1902.

³⁵ SRO, CH1/2/338, General Assembly Papers, Church Cases, 1902, 129-33.

³⁶ J. Boyd Primmer, *Life of Jacob Primmer*, 243.

³⁷ *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1902, 70-1.

³⁸ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 9 July 1902.

supporters taking no further part in the meeting. They announced that they would appeal to the synod. The presbytery then dealt with the internal arrangements and forms of worship at Barnhill with those most unsympathetic to Adamson in the ascendancy. Cooper commented that a “fanatical and ignorant majority made havoc of all that was fine and good”.³⁹ Against the presbytery’s decisions, appeals were made to the synod by Adamson and his supporters. The synod upheld all the complaints and the presbytery appealed to the assembly of 1903 against the finding of the synod.⁴⁰

As a local newspaper put it, by this time the “ecclesiastical maze” had become very complicated with “appeals and counter-appeals”.⁴¹ The assembly first of all sustained the presbytery’s decision not to allow Adamson to be head through an agent.⁴² The assembly then agreed to sist procedure and appointed a committee to confer with Adamson and to report to a future meeting of the assembly. The report of the committee was accepted by the assembly and confirmed the main decision made by the presbytery in its original finding of November 1901. It also, however, commended the frequent celebration of communion and directed the kirk session of Monifieth to meet the “reasonable” wishes of the congregation of Barnhill in this respect.⁴³ The moderator of the assembly, the Rev. Dr John Gillespie of Mouswald, expressed the hope that the assembly might hear no more of Barnhill except its unqualified success.⁴⁴ Although the final decision remained that of the assembly of 1903, the case was carried on at the level of the presbytery and the synod for another year over comparatively trivial matters.

The opposition of Jacob Primmer to the forms of worship at Barnhill was partly because of the kind of church furnishings and ornamentation which he regarded as inconsistent with presbyterianism and meant that the sacrifice of the mass was being offered by Adamson.⁴⁵ After its visitation in 1902, the presbytery of Dundee decided that “the altar, with its cross, candlesticks, frontals, and other appurtenances, be removed from the chapel”, and that “the baptismal font be removed from its present situation and placed near to the pulpit”.⁴⁶ The items about which Primmer

³⁹ Aberdeen University Library [AUL], MS.2283/24, Diaries of James Cooper, 9 July 1902, 55.

⁴⁰ Minutes of the Synod of Angus and Mearns, 28 October 1902.

⁴¹ *Advertiser*, 29 May 1903.

⁴² *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1903, 58.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 73-4. The committee was composed of the Rev. Dr Norman Macleod of Inverness, convener, the Rev. Dr Archibald Scott, the Rev. Dr Theodore Marshall, Sheriff Cheyne (the Procurator), and Mr C. N. Johnston (later Lord Sands).

⁴⁴ *Advertiser*, 28 May 1903.

⁴⁵ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 2 October 1901.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 9 July 1902.

had complained, and which the presbytery did not include in their judgement, were a brass eagle lectern, vases for flowers which stood on the communion table, and a lamp which hung above the table.

With regards to the “altar”, Adamson said that it was a communion table of the “plainest possible” kind, having four plain legs of wood and a wooden top.⁴⁷ The presbytery, however, said that it might have been believed to be a communion table but for the ornaments “inseparable from the altars of churches not connected with the Church of Scotland”.⁴⁸ In addition, Adamson had referred to the table as an “altar” on several occasions.⁴⁹ He also claimed that a popish altar must have a stone slab or *mensa*, contain relics, and have a tabernacle to contain the so-called host. But he had himself spoken of the “altar” at Barnhill as having a “slab or *mensa* of sweet-scented cedar”.⁵⁰ The presbytery said that the question was not whether that altar was popish, but whether it was a communion table such as is seen generally in churches connected with the Church of Scotland. Action had been taken because the altar at Barnhill was suggestive of that form of “sacrificial worship” which is foreign to the Kirk.⁵¹

Complaint had also been made about the cross, candlesticks and the frontals of the “altar” and about the position of the font. Adamson said that the cross was simply a cross and not a crucifix. It was not essential to the worship of the congregation and was a piece of antique and valuable work.⁵² The presbytery said that both a crucifix and a cross were out of place resting on a communion table.⁵³ Adamson said that the candlesticks were of artistic value and were not essential to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The candles were not lighted at services on bright summer mornings as a concession to popular prejudice. The presbytery said that candles as well as crosses were “hindrances rather than helps to the spiritual worshipper”.⁵⁴ Adamson claimed that the frontals or embroidered coverings of the altar were in common, although not in general, use in the Church of Scotland. The presbytery said that such a claim was a “wild exaggeration” and that Barnhill should

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3 September 1902.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 October 1902.

⁴⁹ E.g. Adamson, “How to make something of an Iron Church”.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵¹ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 1 October 1902.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 3 September 1902 and 2 October 1902. According to Primmer the cross was large and elaborately carved in brass with embossed figures (*ibid.*, 12 June 1901).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1 October 1902.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 3 September 1902 and 2 October 1902. One modification which Adamson had been prepared to make to the presbytery in 1901 was that there should be no candlesticks on the communion table at the morning service (*ibid.*, 2 October 1901).

follow the many rather than the few who favoured such novel practices.⁵⁵ The baptismal font at Barnhill was near the door of the church and Adamson said that its position was not contrary to law and implied no false doctrine. As a result of its position the law and usage of the church were brought into accord, the vast majority of children being baptised in public and in face of the congregation who turned round to witness the baptism. The presbytery said in reply that the position of the font at Barnhill was contrary to the expressed law of the church. Children were to be baptised “in the face of the congregation” and not behind their backs.⁵⁶

The final judgment of the general assembly stated:⁵⁷

“The minister . . . shall not replace on the Communion Table the cross, candlesticks, frontals, and other appurtenances which gave it the appearance of an ‘altar’.”

Thus Adamson was able to keep the table but could not replace the items which the presbytery had ordered to be removed. The assembly decision, however, had made no mention of the position of the font and Adamson was able to place it near the door once more.⁵⁸ As for the cross, candlesticks, and frontals, Adamson does not seem to have attached any doctrinal significance to them. He had said on one occasion that the various ornaments in the church were not “out of place” and that the church had to “advance with the times” in an age of progress.⁵⁹ They seem to have had an artistic value for him. The assembly decision seems to have been carried out. An article in the *Evening Post* in June 1903 stated that Adamson had arranged the furniture to adhere strictly to the decision of the general assembly.⁶⁰ The communion table was covered with a plain white cloth with vases of flowers upon it. There is no direct evidence to ascertain whether Adamson continued to adhere to the assembly’s decision. *The Book of St Margaret’s*, however, recorded the gift of a white altar frontal in

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 3 September 1902 and 2 October 1902. Frontals were used by James Cooper at Aberdeen (James Cooper, “New Frontal for St Nicholas’ Aberdeen”, *Transactions of the Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society*, 3 (1894-6), 275.

⁵⁶ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 3 September 1902 and 2 October 1902. According to the Westminster Directory, “Of Baptism”, baptism is not to be administered privately but “in the place of public worship, and in the face of the congregation, where the people may most conveniently see and hear; and not in the places where fonts, in the time of Popery, were unfitly and superstitiously placed”. Cf. William Mair, *A Digest of Laws and Decisions* (Edinburgh, 1887), 51.

⁵⁷ *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1903, 74.

⁵⁸ *Evening Post*, 1 June 1903.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 6 March 1901.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 June 1903. Cf. *Glasgow Herald*, 1 June 1903.

1905, and the Rev. J. F. G. Orr referred to the use of both the cross and the frontals shortly after he succeeded Adamson at Barnhill in 1911.⁶¹ Barnhill was not typical of the general practice among members of the Scottish Church Society with regard to the degree of ornamentation associated with the communion table, although John Charleson had gone even further in having a tabernacle at Thornliebank. With regard to the position of the font, however, some members of the society thought that it should be placed near to the entrance of the church.⁶²

The way in which the interior of the church was arranged was not the only reason for the criticism of Adamson's ministry. Concern was also expressed over his conduct of worship. After their visitation in 1902, the presbytery decided that Adamson should conduct the services from the pulpit, that he should not pray with his back to the congregation, and that he should not genuflect before the communion table.⁶³ Adamson denied that he had used genuflections. Conducting worship from the pulpit, he said, was not a law of the church and practice varied in this respect. He said that there was a theological reason for praying with his back to the congregation. In his view, the presbytery's injunction encouraged the "sacerdotal" idea that the minister is praying to God for his people instead of leading their devotions.⁶⁴ The presbytery, however, said that it was their aim to banish such an idea of prayer. The final decision of the assembly made no reference to Adamson's manner of leading worship and he was able to resume the conduct of services from positions other than the pulpit.⁶⁵ It would appear that he was alone among high churchmen in praying with his back to the congregation, although others agreed to thinking that prayer should not be offered from the pulpit.⁶⁶

The presbytery also referred to Adamson's manner of celebrating communion. They enjoined him to stand behind the table and said that the congregation should receive communion seated in their pews or at the table.⁶⁷ Adamson pointed out that the injunction about the posture of the people did not apply to the quarterly communions at which the congregation had always received the elements in their pews. With regard to the early morning monthly celebrations a table had been provided for the

⁶¹ Orr, "Saint Margaret's Parish Church", 262-3.

⁶² James Cooper and E. L. Thompson, "Church Fabrics" Scottish Church Society, *The Divine Life in the Church*, Conferences, Second Series (Edinburgh, 1985), ii, 244, 253.

⁶³ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 9 July 1902.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 3 September 1902.

⁶⁵ *Evening Post*, 1 June 1903 and *Glasgow Herald*, 1 June 1903.

⁶⁶ E.g. R. R. Anderson, "Church Fabrics" Scottish Church Society, *Divine Life in the Church*, ii, 234; James Cooper, "Principles of Christian Worship" *Transactions of the Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society*, 1.1 (1886-9), 18.

⁶⁷ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 6 November 1901 and 9 July 1902.

communicants after the first judgement of the presbytery in 1901. Adamson had instituted the practice of kneeling to receive communion, but said that the congregation were not asked to kneel and that he would not refuse communion to someone who did not kneel.⁶⁸ The assembly enjoined Adamson not to kneel himself at communion and to make arrangements whereby the people might partake seated.⁶⁹ The assembly also said that the table should be so placed that the minister might stand behind it facing the congregation. Adamson had admitted to the presbytery's committee in 1901 that he adopted the eastward position in celebrating communion, in front of the table with his back to the congregation, and that this position was used at the quarterly as well as at the monthly celebrations. There is no evidence that any other member of the Scottish Church Society administered communion to the people kneeling or in the eastward position, although Cooper had commented favourably on Adamson's use of the eastward position. Cooper gave a description of a communion service which he attended in 1886 and which was a quarterly celebration:⁷⁰

“Prose Psalms, *Te Deum*, Magnificat, Gloria in Excelsis — congregation stand and join in singing Creed. Eastward position, Alms brought up to Holy Table, *Laus Deo*.”

The general view among high churchmen was that communion should be received in the traditional Scottish manner seated at a table.⁷¹

Adamson's practice of elevating the cup during the communion service had been forbidden by the presbytery in 1901. Adamson said that he elevated the cup at that part of the service when he used the Lord's own words and during the prayer when a blessing is asked on the elements.⁷² Adamson appears to have carried out the presbytery's decision in this regard.⁷³ The assembly, however, did not mention the elevation of the cup and Adamson resumed the practice.⁷⁴ Cooper remarked that Dr Sprott had spoken in favour of the elevation of the cup during the assembly debate in 1902.⁷⁵ The presbytery also said that Adamson should use at the communion only “the ordinary elements sanctioned by the

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2 October 1901.

⁶⁹ *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1903, 74.

⁷⁰ AUL, MS. 2283/8, Diaries of James Cooper, 4 July 1886, 62.

⁷¹ Thompson, *op. cit.*, 245; G. W. Sprott, *The Worship and Offices of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1882), 134.

⁷² Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 6 November and 2 October 1901.

⁷³ *Advertiser*, 2 December 1901.

⁷⁴ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 7 October 1903.

⁷⁵ AUL, MS. 2283/24, Diaries of James Cooper, 20 May 1902. Sprott thought that the cup should be elevated during the first action of the service when the elements are set apart (*Worship and Offices*, 114-6).

Church of Scotland'', which referred to Adamson's practice of adding water to the wine.⁷⁶ Adamson claimed that the practice was not contrary to the law of the church and that the cup at the Last Supper would have been a mixed cup of water and wine.⁷⁷ The assembly enjoined him to use "no other elements than bread and wine".⁷⁸ Adamson had also admitted that he consumed the wine which remained in the cup. He thought that this was the most respectful way of disposing of the wine. He also rinsed the chalice after the service. The courts of the church did not adjudicate upon this practice.

The question of the frequency of communion at Barnhill was not raised by Jacob Primmer, but it arose in the course of the case because the kirk session of Monifieth had never authorised a monthly or even a quarterly celebration. The presbytery enjoined that no communions be observed except those ordered by the kirk session.⁷⁹ In his appeal to the synod, Adamson pointed out that the kirk session had declined to interfere in the arrangements for communion at Barnhill when informed of them in 1885. The assembly enjoined that communion should only be celebrated at times fixed by the kirk session, but they told the session to be more careful in the discharge of their obligations in connection with Barnhill, and they recommended them to meet "the reasonable desire of the minister and congregation of the said Chapel for more frequent opportunities of communion".⁸⁰ When Barnhill achieved full parochial status in 1907, its newly-formed session appointed quarterly and monthly celebrations.⁸¹ Two members of the Scottish Church Society, James Cooper and Wallace Williamson, rejoiced at the assembly's recommendation in favour of more frequent communion.⁸²

The presbytery also dealt with the liturgy used by Adamson at holy communion. It was ruled that "the use of the Liturgy" be discontinued.⁸³ The assembly decided that the use of "the special offices printed in the papers submitted to the General Assembly of

⁷⁶ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 9 July 1902; *The Courier, Dundee*, 5 August 1901.

⁷⁷ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 3 September 1902. Cf. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (London, 1912), 497; G. B. Burnet, *The Holy Communion in the Reformed Church of Scotland, 1560-1960* (Edinburgh, 1960), 31-2.

⁷⁸ *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1903, 74. Sprott commented favourably on the use of the mixed cup (*Worship and Offices*, 242).

⁷⁹ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 9 July 1902.

⁸⁰ *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1903, 74.

⁸¹ St Margaret's Parish Church, Barnhill, Minutes of the Kirk Session of Barnhill, 15 April 1907.

⁸² Scottish Church Society, *Annual Report*, 1902-3, 20, 23.

⁸³ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 9 July 1902.

1902, and of all similar offices, is prohibited".⁸⁴ Thus the *Office of the Holy Communion*, which was used at the early morning services, was prohibited from further use.⁸⁵ The assembly's decision was thus not against the use of a liturgy as such, but against the liturgies used by Adamson. As Adamson admitted, the service which he used was largely taken, not from the *Missal* as Primmer had claimed, but from the First Prayer Book of Edward VI.⁸⁶ In particular, the presbytery and the assembly directed him to use the words at the distribution of the elements from the Westminster Directory or a similar formula taken from scripture.⁸⁷

Underlying the objections to Adamson's practice of worship, however, lay a more serious unease concerning his doctrinal position. Jacob Primmer had complained that Adamson prayed for the dead. After their visitation the presbytery directed that Adamson should avoid giving the appearance of praying for the dead and this injunction was repeated by the assembly.⁸⁸ The presbytery had earlier enjoined Adamson to discontinue prayers of intercession for the dead.⁸⁹ Adamson had prayed that mercy and everlasting peace might be given to the dead, taking the prayer from the general intercession of the First Prayer Book of Edward VI. He said that since the first injunction he had not offered such prayers. He still gave thanks for the dead, but this, he said, is not a prayer of intercession, since "nothing is asked for them, but only that God is *thanked for what He has already given to them*".⁹⁰ Adamson thus came to conform to what was regarded by other high churchmen at the time as an acceptable remembrance of the faithful departed in prayer.

Primmer had also complained that Adamson had used an absolution of sins which was a "sacerdotal" and "priestly" assumption.⁹¹ Adamson admitted using an absolution. It was taken from Dr G. W. Sprott's book, *The Worship and Offices of the Church of Scotland*.⁹² The saying of the absolution was not mentioned in the presbytery's judgements, although the assembly directed Adamson to be careful to avoid all "postures and phraseology" which would be misunderstood and thus be

⁸⁴ *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1903, 74.

⁸⁵ Printed in SRO, CH1/2/338, General Assembly Papers, Church Cases, 1902, 135-8.

⁸⁶ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 2 October 1901.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 6 November 1901; *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1903, 74.

⁸⁸ Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 9 July 1902.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 6 November 1901.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3 September 1902.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 2 October 1901. Cf. Appeal of Jacob Primmer to the Assembly of 1902, SRO, CH1/2/338, General Assembly Papers, Church Cases, 1902, 132.

⁹² Sprott, *Worship and Offices*, 25 n.1.

detrimental to the peace of the church.⁹³ Adamson had seen Cooper vindicate his use of an absolution in the East Church Case.⁹⁴

Primmer's fundamental objection was that Adamson celebrated the mass at Barnhill. He argued that since there was an altar there must also be a sacrifice. The same divisions of the mass were to be found in the liturgy used by Adamson which was made up, he claimed, of the popish passages from Edward VI's Prayer Book.⁹⁵ The presbytery had also thought that Adamson's use of the word "altar" implied a sacrificial meaning. Principal Story said at the assembly in 1902 that there was a difference between the movement for improving ritual in the church and the ritualism at Barnhill. The latter, he said, had a doctrinal motivation and was full of danger to the church if it indicated a general movement. He was loudly applauded when he said that the presbytery of Dundee should say to Adamson:⁹⁶

"Take these things hence; and make not our Father's house a den of superstition."

The assembly, however, did not make any reference to Adamson's doctrine of holy communion in its final judgement. Adamson had used the communion service in the First Prayer Book of Edward VI, a liturgy which had no tradition of use in the Church of Scotland and which was closely based on the order of the mass.⁹⁷ Adamson's name had been linked with that of John Charleson who had become a Roman Catholic in 1901, but Adamson said that he had no popish leanings.⁹⁸ Dr Norman Macleod said at the assembly that it had not been surprising that the suspicion of "popish leanings" had been awakened in the minds of many by the practices at Barnhill.⁹⁹

The view was expressed during the course of the case that Adamson's ministry was representative of the wider movement of high churchmanship in Scotland.¹⁰⁰ The Rev. Dr H. G. Watt of Dundee expressed this view at the presbytery in November 1901;¹⁰¹ and at the assembly of 1902 Dr Andrew Miller said Adamson's ministry was an example of a general movement which had a right to exist in the Church of Scotland.¹⁰² Adamson, however, had gone

⁹³ *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1903, 74.

⁹⁴ See Murray, "James Cooper and the East Church Case at Aberdeen", 229-30.

⁹⁵ SRO, CH1/2/338, General Assembly Papers, Church Cases, 1902, 130, 131.

⁹⁶ *Advertiser*, 27 May 1902.

⁹⁷ G. J. Cuming, *A History of the Anglican Liturgy* (London, 1969), 75, 77.

⁹⁸ *Courier*, 12 November 1901; *Advertiser*, 23 November 1901.

⁹⁹ *Advertiser*, 28 May 1903.

¹⁰⁰ *Courier*, 1 June 1901; letters to the editor in the *Advertiser*, 12 November 1901 and in the *Courier*, 23 July 1902.

¹⁰¹ *Advertiser*, 7 November 1901.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 27 May 1902.

further than most members of the Scottish Church Society in the area of ornamentation and ritual, in the liturgy and doctrine of holy communion, and with regard to prayers for the dead. A member of the society wrote to the *Advertiser* to say that he could not approve of Adamson's practices.¹⁰³ H. J. Wotherspoon considered that Adamson had "certainly exceeded the standard of ornament (in the technical sense of the word) and of ritual, which on any reckoning was known or practised in the Church of Scotland".¹⁰⁴ Adamson's friends, he said, were in a dilemma at the assembly of 1902. It was hopeless "to plead for such liberty as he had assumed".¹⁰⁵ Thus Sprott supported Archibald Scott's motion, while Cooper seconded that of Andrew Miller. Cooper did not wish to give the mistaken impression that Adamson represented a concerted movement, in which case the assembly might have been more severe with him. Cooper privately expressed the opinion that the assembly that year was a "Furiously Protestant House".¹⁰⁶ Cooper had been happy with Adamson's communion service at Barnhill but it was much more advanced than Cooper's own practice.¹⁰⁷ Adamson was one of those who, following Cooper in his interest in the externals of worship and in the traditions of the church, went much further than him in the area of ritual.

The Barnhill Case was also the result of other factors. The church had been founded by men who were of high church sympathies against the wishes of the kirk session of Monifieth. The poor relations between Barnhill and Monifieth only ceased when St Margaret's was erected as a fully independent church in 1907. The case was also the result of the agitation of Jacob Primmer and did not arise out of complaints by members of the congregation. Primmer was pleased with his reception at the assembly of 1902. He thought that the Lord had opened the eyes of the ministers and elders of the church to the heretical teachings and performances at Barnhill.¹⁰⁸ Primmer, however, was very dissatisfied with the course of the case after that assembly. He did not think that Adamson had carried out the decision of the presbytery of July 1902. He protested at the end of a service at Barnhill and was

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 29 May 1902.

¹⁰⁴ Wotherspoon, *James Cooper*, 215.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 216.

¹⁰⁶ AUL, MS. 2283/24, Diaries of James Cooper, 2 May 1902, 43.

¹⁰⁷ James Cooper, *The Divine Liturgy*, the order at the holy table, East Church of St Nicholas, Aberdeen (Aberdeen, 1892). Cooper's communion service was almost identical to that contained in H. J. Wotherspoon, *The Divine Service*, A Eucharistic Office, according to forms of the primitive church (Glasgow, 1893).

¹⁰⁸ J. Boyd Primmer, *Life of Jacob Primmer*, 243.

successfully prosecuted for a breach of the peace.¹⁰⁹ Primmer thought that the decision of the assembly in 1903 was a complete reversal of that of the previous year.¹¹⁰ He thought that the committee of assembly was “partisan” as could be seen in their advocacy of more frequent communion.¹¹¹ Primmer had earlier received support from the *Dundee Courier* and the *Evening Post*,¹¹² but the latter newspaper considered that the assembly’s final decision was an “unconditional surrender” by Adamson.¹¹³

None of the managers of Barnhill and only one member of the congregation made complaints to the presbytery during the course of the case.¹¹⁴ Adamson had tested congregational opinion in a ballot in August 1901 and had received a large amount of support in favour of the service continuing in its existing form.¹¹⁵ In the ballot, 121 members said that they were in favour of the service, and 28 said that they were against it continuing in its existing form. There was also no significant decrease in the membership of the congregation during the course of the case.¹¹⁶ Adamson was also well liked and respected by the congregation. He had been assured by the members that he need not ask in the ballot if they were satisfied that he earnestly desired to do what was for the glory of God and for their welfare.¹¹⁷ High opinions of Adamson’s character and work as a minister were expressed by Dr Norman Macleod,¹¹⁸ Dr Archibald Scott,¹¹⁹ and by C. N. Johnston.¹²⁰

¹⁰⁹ *Advertiser*, 6 September 1902. The reports in both the *Advertiser* and the *Courier*, however, said that Adamson had carried out the presbytery’s injunctions (14 July 1902).

¹¹⁰ Jacob Primmer, *The Barnhill Church, Awful Popery* (Dunfermline, 1904).

¹¹¹ *Advertiser*, 2 June 1903.

¹¹² Primmer had published a pamphlet of extracts, mainly from the *Courier* and the *Post* shortly after the assembly of 1901 (Jacob Primmer, *Pastor Jacob Primmer and Dundee Presbytery, The Sacrifice of the Mass in Barnhill Church* (Dunfermline, 1901)).

¹¹³ *Evening Post*, 28 May 1903. The *Post* had not been an unqualified supporter of Primmer. When Primmer first made known his complaints about the services at Barnhill the *Post* said that he was well known for the “recklessness” of his accusations (31 May 1901).

¹¹⁴ Only three members of the congregation appeared before the presbytery’s committee in 1901 and of those only one was out of sympathy with Adamson’s ministry (Minutes of the Presbytery of Dundee, 2 October 1901).

¹¹⁵ St Margaret’s Parish Church, Barnhill, Minutes of the Managers, Barnhill Church, 24 August 1901; *Courier*, 26 August 1901.

¹¹⁶ According to a census taken on one Sunday at Dundee churches every ten years by the *Dundee Year Book*, the attendance at Barnhill had increased from 72 in 1891 to 116 in 1901, compared to a decline in most other churches in Broughty Ferry (*Dundee Year Book for 1901* (Dundee, 1902)).

¹¹⁷ *Courier*, 26 August 1901.

¹¹⁸ *Advertiser*, 28 May 1903.

¹¹⁹ Church of Scotland, *The Layman’s Book of the General Assembly*, ed. H. M. B. Reid (Edinburgh, 1902), 96.

¹²⁰ *Advertiser*, 28 May 1903.

Adamson's high churchmanship was accepted by the congregation partly because of his character and work as a minister. Yet several of his practices were disallowed by the courts of the church. Adamson's ministry represents the tendency towards ritualism in the Scottish Church Society and is not typical of the main concerns of high churchmen. Ornamentation and ritual were of importance to Adamson; he used the eastward position at communion; he used the First Prayer Book of Edward VI which would suggest that he held a higher doctrine of communion than was general in the society; and he prayed for mercy on the faithful departed. Yet several of his practices were shared by others in the society and these changes remained uncondemned at the end of the case. Such practices included the placing of the font near to the door of the church, the leading of prayer from positions in the church other than the pulpit in order to be free from a "sacerdotal" view, the elevation of the cup in the communion service, the monthly celebration of communion, and the use of an absolution. The outcome of the Barnhill Case, as well as illustrating the limits of ritual which the Kirk regarded as permissible, also shows the extent to which acceptance had been won for such high church practices in the Church of Scotland.